

Report to BYM Interim Meeting from Program Committee 10/20/18

The Program Committee (PC), through the work of a sub-committee on Schedule, spent considerable time over the last year examining the current schedule of events at Annual Session (AS). The sub-committee charge was to review the AS schedule, with an eye towards addressing comments from evaluation forms, as well as issues identified by PC members. We were concerned, in particular, with the decline in weekend attendance. We ended up looking at almost every aspect of the current AS schedule.

We made changes to the 2018 schedule to address some of these concerns (including adding a time for all-community meeting for worship and adding a 3rd time slot for interest groups).

Collecting information and ideas, we:

- Reviewed AS schedules over the last 20+ years;
- Designed and promoted a short survey (online and paper) and began a wider conversation about the AS schedule at the March 2018 Interim Meeting;
- Consulted with many individuals, including BYM staff;
- Began a review of past business meeting agendas to analyze how we spend our time (Required decisions? Hearing reports and concerns? Celebrating our work together?);
- Devoted significant Program Committee time to a discussion of various proposals to shorten AS, including consideration of impact of changes on many aspects of AS program (the retreat, JYM, etc.);
- Held two interest group “listening sessions” at AS in August.

Discernment and conclusions

For quite a few months we leaned heavily towards shortening Annual Sessions by at least a day, and shared that idea at June Interim Meeting. By late summer, however, after thoroughly reviewing all the feedback we received, and reflecting on the great value felt by many of time together at Annual Sessions, the sub-committee recommended NOT shortening Annual Sessions at this time. Program Committee concurred with this discernment. We decided to “flip” the Friday and Saturday evening schedule, with coffee house on Friday, and the Carey lecture on Saturday. Program Committee will continue to work with the AS schedule, incorporating new ideas and programs as way opens.

Annual Sessions 2019 will be held Monday, July 29 (beginning with retreat), through Sunday, August 4. The opening night plenary will be on Tuesday, July 30, and the Carey Lecture will be on Saturday, August 3.

Barb Platt, clerk
Program Committee